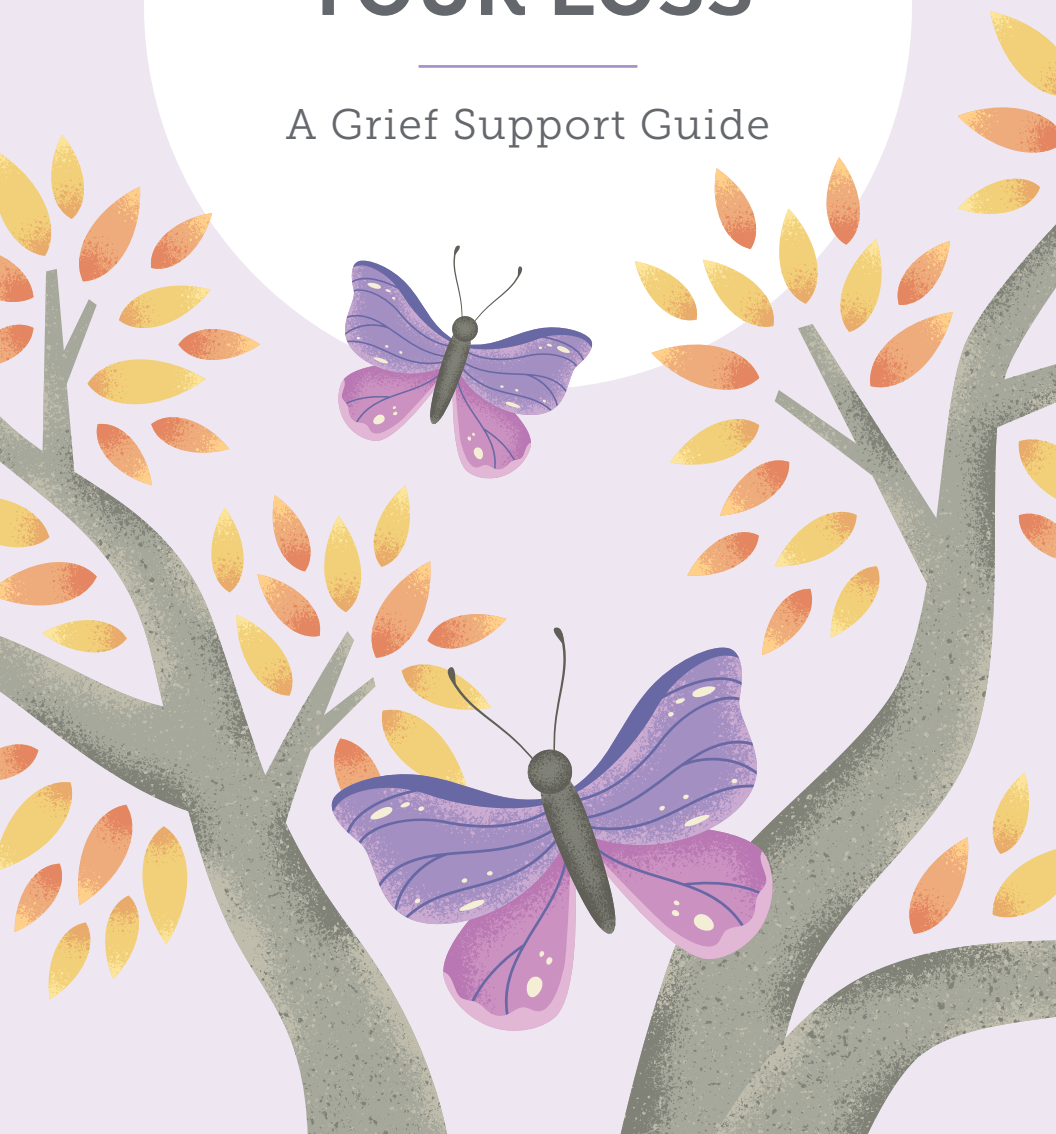


COPING WITH YOUR LOSS

A Grief Support Guide



Nothing is more devastating than the death of a child.



You may be wondering how you will ever survive your loss. Some days may feel like you are taking a few steps forward. Other days you may feel like you've gone backward.



Your relationship with St. Jude does not end because your child has died.

We are here to support you in your grief. We can help connect your family to grief resources through the St. Jude bereavement program and even in your local community and online.

You will be contacted by the St. Jude bereavement program several times during the first year. We hope this will provide support and comfort. Please let us know if your contact information changes or if you do not want to be contacted.

GRIEF IS DEEPLY PERSONAL.

No two people grieve the same. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve and no magical time frame for getting through it. Grieving involves many difficult emotions but can also include moments of joy, contentment and humor. Life will never go back to the old “normal,” but in time your emotions can become bearable again. Adjusting to the absence of your child may require you and your family to develop new routines, envision a new future and even adopt a new identity.

When grief is new, you may feel numb, as if you are in a fog or just going through the motions.

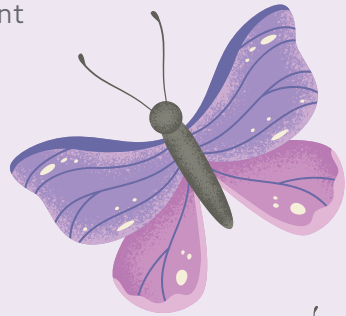
Simple tasks such as getting out of bed and getting dressed can seem overwhelming. At times, you may want to be alone with your thoughts and emotions. You may feel detached from friends and family members. It might seem that no one really understands what you are going through. Others may offer help, but you might not know what you need.



Normal grief may be experienced and expressed in a variety of emotional and physical ways.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS CAN INCLUDE:

- Shock
- Extreme sadness or loss of enjoyment
- Guilt and regret
- Ongoing worries and fear
- Anger
- Relief
- Emptiness or numbness
- Feeling lonely or detached



COMMON PHYSICAL REACTIONS:

- Crying
- Trouble eating or upset stomach
- Problems falling asleep or staying asleep
- Feeling restless
- Panic attacks
- Feeling tired or exhausted

COMMON SPIRITUAL REACTIONS:

- Questioning your faith or beliefs
- Anger at God
- Not able to forgive
- Feeling spiritually disconnected



HELPFUL TIPS

Grief counseling can be helpful for you and your family at any point in your grief journey. The St. Jude grief support coordinator can help you locate a counselor in your community.

Identify one person to coordinate offers of help and support from others.

Many people find comfort in the company of others who have experienced a similar loss, such as a support group for bereaved parents. Ask us about the St. Jude bereaved parent mentor program.

Treat yourself kindly and with compassion. Give yourself time and space to grieve. Give yourself permission to laugh and feel joy without feeling guilty.

Getting enough sleep, eating healthy, drinking lots of water and bathing may make you feel a bit better.

Physical activity has been shown to help improve mood. Going for a walk or doing a physical task may provide a moment of peace.

Accept offers of support. Allow yourself to lean on others who are there for you. Friends, family members, co-workers and members of your church can often help with some of the challenging aspects of grief.

Focus on today. Allow yourself to take one day at a time.

IF YOU ARE IN CRISIS



Grief-related thoughts, behaviors and feelings can be extremely distressing and unrelenting. A qualified mental health professional may be able to help. Therapy can help you learn to cope with the stressors related to loss and can help you manage distressing symptoms.



Symptoms of grief can become life threatening, especially if they don't improve after many months. If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, please:

- Call 911 right away and tell the operator you are having these thoughts,
- Ask someone you trust to take you to the nearest emergency room,
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) to reach a trained counselor, or
- Contact a trained crisis counselor by texting HOME to 741741 (if in the US) to receive support 24/7.

FINDING SUPPORT

For grief support and resources for you or your family look to:

- Hospices and funeral homes
- Online search: grief, bereavement
- Churches: for support groups, counseling
- Pediatrician
- Hospital: often offer support groups
- Health insurance
- School counselor

ST. JUDE PROVIDES ONLINE GRIEF RESOURCES FOR:

- Children
- Teenagers and young adults
- Siblings
- Parents
- Mothers
- Fathers
- Grandparents
- Adults
- Parenting grieving children
- Parenting grieving teenagers
- Supporting others who are grieving
- Support through the holidays
- Spanish resources
- School support for grieving children
- Grief retreats and camps



To learn more about coping with grief, visit our
“Frequently Asked Questions” or “Grief Resources” at

www.stjude.org/bereavement.



For more information and resources, contact
the St. Jude grief support coordinator:

Lisa Clark, PhD

Phone: 901-595-2658 Email: lisa.clark@stjude.org

www.stjude.org/bereavement

St. Jude complies with health care-related federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

ATTENTION: If you speak another language, assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-866-278-5833 (TTY: 1-901-595-1040).

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-278-5833 (TTY: 1-901-595-1040).

تنبيه: إذا كنت تتحدث باللغة العربية فيمكنك الاستعانة بخدمات المساعدة اللغوية المتوفرة لك مجاناً. يرجى الاتصال بالرقم 1-866-278-5833 (الهاتف النصي: 1-901-595-1040).